

About this letter. . .
Election-year mail restrictions

It's important to me that we communicate so you can stay apprised of issues that impact our communities. Part of that communication includes newsletters like this one.

Voters approved a campaign reform initiative that restricts state-paid legislative mailings during an election year. Since 2004 is an election year for state representatives and senators, the law allows me to only send two legislative mailings this year. This is the second of those newsletters.

I am allowed to provide a direct response to constituent-initiated contacts. If you send me a letter or e-mail, I can respond. However, I can't initiate contact through state-paid mail, fax or e-mail.

TVW, a nonprofit public affairs network, broadcasts the Legislature when it's in session and other state events on cable television throughout the state. You may call TVW for programming information at 360-586-5555, or visit their website at www.tvw.org.

What's most important to your family?
Share your thoughts

I'd like to hear from you. Please take time to share your thoughts below and return this card to the address provided.

Rep. Jack Cairnes, 428 John L. O'Brien Bldg., P.O. Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504-0600.
You can also send your thoughts to my e-mail address: cairnes_ja@leg.wa.gov

Rep. Jack Cairnes

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Post-session Report

For residents of the 47th District

Dear Friends,

The 2004 legislative session is now in the books. Legislators will reconvene in January 2005 for a 105-day session.

We saw some great successes this year. Laws were passed that will enhance our education system, assist small employers, and make our neighborhoods safer. We also passed a supplemental budget.

There were also some missed opportunities. The Legislature failed to enact any true tort reform, lift some of the unnecessary regulatory burdens facing job-providers, and provide the necessary tax relief to employers and families.

We must continue to find ways to move Washington's economy forward by creating and preserving jobs. With each bill and issue that comes before me, its impact on jobs is always at the forefront of my decision-making.

Our economy needs a boost and I believe state government can play an important role. In this newsletter I'll outline some of my ideas on how we can do this. As the condition of our state's economy improves, so does the well-being of our hard-working families.

Though my time in Olympia is only for a few months each year, I'm your full-time legislator. Please contact me if I can help.

Sincerely,

Jack Cairnes

Rep. Jack Cairnes



47th District Post-session Report

More must be done to protect current, attract new employers

In my last two newsletters, I talked about the importance of keeping Boeing’s new jet production here. When Boeing announced it would be building its new generation 7E7 airplanes in Everett, it was a step in the right direction for our state. This project alone is estimated to create 17,300 new jobs over the next decade or so.

Legislators and business leaders worked diligently on this issue. This partnership is a great template for preserving current and bringing new industry to the state. Most importantly, legislators learned that they need to listen to the concerns of job providers.

We have a lot more work to do, and it should continue the rest of this year. It’s time to move Washington’s struggling economy forward. This means being fiscally responsible as a state and increasing our competitiveness for existing and new employers through:

- ✓ Regulatory relief
- ✓ Increasing the small business tax credit
- ✓ Creating affordable small group insurance
- ✓ Addressing business liability insurance costs



Job creation through tax incentives

There’s no question that tax incentives foster job creation. Some mistakenly view tax incentives as a drain on the treasury. This couldn’t be more untrue.

Tax incentives merely offset part of the taxes an employer pays. I would rather have our state receive most of an employer’s tax revenue and retain all of its jobs, than watch them go to another state.

This session, a measure was passed that extends tax incentives to entice high-tech employers to locate and expand in Washington. These tax incentives are already on the books, but were set to expire. It was important we renew them. We understand and appreciate the jobs and technology these employers provide.



Lessening the tax burden on families and senior citizens

The lessons learned from tax incentives for employers should be applied to the citizens of our state. With our economy showing signs of recovery but still struggling in some areas, families need property tax relief. With more money in their pockets, families will invest in the economy and stimulate growth.

The Legislature passed a bill that’s a step in the right direction and protects vulnerable citizens. This measure gives property tax exemptions for disabled senior citizens.



A missed opportunity for true tort reform

A tort is a wrongful act, damage or injury done willfully by a party to someone else. A victim has the right to bring a civil suit against the party who caused the act, damage or injury.

I will always support a victim’s right to recover damages when they are harmed by another party’s actions. I also think it needs to be within reason.

There are too many outrageous settlements these days and lawsuits so frivolous that they shouldn’t even be considered. Perhaps you’ve read about some of them in the news. They are causing harm to our economy and are driving our doctors out of the state. We need true tort reform – sooner than later.

Part of being a more employer-friendly state is having a court system that is fair and not an insurmountable burden to job-providers. An equitable court system not only benefits employers, it benefits you – the consumer.

Unfortunately, the Legislature failed to pass any significant tort reform this year. It did pass a few bills that the media appropriately described as “tort lite,” for their lack of addressing the underlying problem.

As a result, doctors and other employers are forced to further endure frivolous and expensive lawsuits – litigation that consumers end up paying for in the long run.

The Senate passed an all-encompassing tort reform bill that would have struck at the heart of the problem. It received a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee where an overwhelming majority of people showed up in support. Yet it never was voted on in this committee and therefore never came before the entire House for a vote.

Other states have shown us that tort reform works. It’s time for Washington to follow the same path. I believe these practical reforms would put the “justice” back in our justice system:

- ✓ Cap on non-economic damages
- ✓ Tort judgment interest rate
- ✓ Advance notice of claim
- ✓ Evidence of collateral sources of payment
- ✓ Binding arbitration of disputes
- ✓ Encouraging early dispute resolution to free up courts and reduce costs
- ✓ Protecting injury victims and consumers by tying money awards to actual fault

Saving our health care system

Health care insurance is still unaffordable and inaccessible to some citizens. As health care costs continue to go up, the crisis worsens. This crisis is one that the Legislature only partially addressed this legislative session.

Part of the reason health care insurance costs continue to rise is because too many government rules tell health insurers what they must put in their plans. These mandates mean more costs for health insurance providers. These costs, in turn, are passed on to consumers.

The Legislature passed a bill that will begin to provide some flexibility to help small employers provide affordable health insurance to their employees. This is a step in the right direction, but we must look for more comprehensive solutions.

A measure also passed that will allow insurance companies to again offer discounts on Medicare Supplement insurance for various payment methods, including electronic fund transfers or annual installments. Spousal discounts were included in the legislation.

We need more health care insurance reforms to help control costs. These reforms will enable more employers to provide health care insurance coverage for their employees.

A great year for K-12 education

This was a banner year for K-12 education and our students will benefit from it in the years to come.

We can do no more as a state than to invest in the hopes and dreams of our students. A vibrant economy starts with a world-class primary and secondary education.

Here are some K-12 highlights from the 2004 legislative session:

- ✓ Requirements for the WASL and graduation were clearly defined. This will allow students multiple and different means of taking the WASL.
- ✓ The Learning Assistance Program was re-vamped to focus grants more on impoverished areas and less on test scores.
- ✓ The school district levy base calculation was changed to allow districts to keep more of the money they’ve raised.
- ✓ Historic charter school legislation passed that will allow for the creation of a limited number of new public charter schools in the state.



Making our neighborhoods safer

There is no more heinous a crime that one perpetrated against a defenseless child.

An important and long overdue measure passed this session that tightens up laws with respect to the Special Sex Offender Sentencing Alternative program – or SSOSA – which allows sex offenders to get treatment and lighter prison sentences.

A law passed by the Legislature now makes it tougher for child rapists and molesters to get treatment instead of prison time. Prior to this bill, child molesters could often go through a treatment program and receive little prison time for their crimes. While treatment is important to criminals, so is the time spent in prison.

Several legislators and I fought for an even stronger bill that would have required mandatory minimum sentences, but a vocal few legislators stopped it from moving forward. However, I’m still supportive of what passed because it sends a stern warning to anyone who might harm children.



More must be done to deter auto theft

Washington continues to be one of the states that lead the nation in auto thefts, with the likes of Arizona, Washington, D.C., and Nevada.

Next to a home, an automobile is often a family’s second most important investment. To have an automobile stolen can be a devastating experience. In addition to the personal, emotional and financial burdens, society as a whole pays for car thefts through higher auto insurance rates.

We’ve tried to address this issue in the past, but some legislators have rejected attempts to provide real punishment for all auto thieves. As a result, juveniles – who commit over half of all the auto thefts – still don’t receive a day in detention until their fifth conviction. Adults who steal cars and can’t be proven to be a part of an organized “chop shop” don’t go to prison until their seventh conviction.

The past legislative session saw a missed opportunity to strengthen laws that would deter would-be auto thieves. As long as we continue to approach this problem like we have, we will continue to be one of the leaders in the country for auto thefts.

Rep. Jack Cairnes
• 47th District •